

Hazardous Noise and Deployment

Information for Service members and their Families

Important facts:

- Noise is unwanted sound, and is one of the most common environmental exposures that Service members will encounter during a deployment.
- Noise that is loud enough to harm your hearing is called hazardous noise, and it can cause temporary or permanent hearing loss. Common hazardous noise sources during deployments include weapons fire, military vehicles, aircraft, shipboard engines and generators.
- Noise that is not loud enough to be harmful to hearing also affects Service members during deployment, and is called nuisance noise. It can prevent you from sleeping restfully and interfere with communication.
- Both hazardous noise and nuisance noise can increase stress levels and harm missions.

Why is hazardous noise an issue during deployment?

Your hearing is a 360 degree warning sense that is “on 24/7.” Think about it. How often are you awakened by something you see? Vision only takes in a little more than 180 degrees and is compromised by darkness and obstructions. Enemy offensive actions produce sounds which may be the first indication of their presence. The sound the enemies make is unaffected by darkness and may go around and over objects. Their offensive actions can be hidden from view, but usually not from your ears.

- It is important to protect your hearing, not only for your own benefit, but also for the sake of your fellow Service members. Approved, conventional earplugs or noise muffs can protect you from most noise exposures where there are minimal communication requirements and hand signals are used. Good hearing for effective communication is critical to our mission on the ground, in the air and at sea.

How do I know if noise is hazardous?

Generally, if you have to raise your voice to speak to someone standing about three feet from you, the noise should be considered hazardous. Trained personnel use sound level meters to measure the levels of noise and determine if it is hazardous. Noise from weapons fire is known to be much more hazardous than noise from other types of equipment. A single exposure to weapons fire or from a loud explosion without the proper use of hearing protection can cause life-long hearing injury and permanent disability. Although hazardous noises of lower intensity usually require more prolonged and repeated exposures to cause permanent hearing loss, they can cause temporary hearing loss that you must live with until your normal hearing returns.

What is nuisance noise?

Nuisance noise disrupts normal activity. Communications during military exercises and operations are critical to success. Communicating in a noisy environment can cause increased stress, voice problems, high blood pressure, and can easily lead to miscommunications. Nuisance noise can also cause difficulty getting adequate rest.

Can noise affect the mission success?

Absolutely. Survivability and lethality both rely heavily on the ability to communicate. If you have trouble communicating because of the presence of noise or due to hearing loss from weapons fire, your ability to communicate, hear orders and identify the sounds necessary to locate the enemy can be affected greatly.

Lives are placed at risk when there is a loss of command and control because of noise. It is often written off as the “fog of war,” but it can have

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A collaborative effort between the Air Force Institute for Operational Health, the Deployment Health Clinical Center, Force Health Protection and Readiness, the Navy Environmental Health Center, the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, and the OUSD(P&R)/Military Family and Community Policy



devastating results if critical information is involved not communicated.

What steps can be taken to limit the effects of noise?

- Approved, conventional earplugs or noise muffs can protect you from most noise exposures where there are minimal communication requirements and hand signals are used. Experienced personnel, particularly for night missions, may wear conventional hearing protection for the noisy ride in, especially if being transported by helicopters. Once dismounted, they remove the conventional hearing protectors, and their hearing is intact for the mission.
- Hearing protectors are also available that not only protect your hearing but enable you to communicate fully and maintain situational awareness. The [Combat Arms Earplug](#), the [Communication Enhancement and Protective System \(CEPS\)](#) and the [Quiet Pro](#) all are effective from this standpoint. Other electronic devices such as the [Infantry Tactical Headset](#) and the [Armored Vehicle Crewman's Helmet](#) are designed for use in vehicles.

- Nuisance noise can be reduced by: using tactically quiet generators, moving generators away from rest areas; locating rest areas and sleeping areas away from high traffic areas and the flight line; and locating command and control centers away from such noise sources.



COMBAT ARMS EARPLUGS

Insert **YELLOW** for weapons fire

Insert **OLIVE** for steady state noise

Where Do I Get More Information?

DoD Deployment Health Clinical Center (DHCC)

Phone: (866) 559-1627
<http://www.pdhealth.mil/>

Air Force Institute for Operational Health (AFIOH)

Phone: (888) 232-3764
<http://www.brooks.af.mil/units/airforceinstituteofoperationalhealth/index.asp>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise/>

DoD Force Health Protection and Readiness (FHP & R)

Phone: (800) 497-6261
<http://fhp.osd.mil>

Navy Environmental Health Center (NEHC)

Phone: (757) 953-0700
<http://www.nehc.med.navy.mil>

U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM)

Phone: (800) 222-9698
<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil>

USACHPPM Combat Arms Earplug

Fact Sheet: <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/documents/FACT/51-004-0204.pdf>

USACHPPM War Fighter Hearing Protection Communication Enhancement and Protection System (CEPS) Fact Sheet:

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/documents/FACT/51-005-0504.pdf>



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